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AUTHOR Whalen, Lucille
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ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken to identify the information needs of persons working with the aging in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy area of New York State, with the goal of establishing some type of information center. Over 2,000 questionnaires were sent to groups working with the aging. Over half of the 34 respondents noted a need for information on state legislation affecting older persons, counseling for older persons, and assisting older persons in self-help projects. A 40-item bibliography, the questionnaire, and a cover letter are included. (Author/DS)

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INFORMATION NEEDS OF PERSONS WORKING WITH THE AGING

by

Lucille Whalen, Associate Dean
School of Library and Information Science
State University of New York at Albany
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INFORMATION NEEDS OF PERSONS WORKING WITH THE AGING

One of the many complicated problems facing state, county, and local governments in New York, and indeed the federal government, is care of the aging. According to the 1970 census, there are some 1,154,562 persons over 65 in New York, comprising the largest 65-plus population of any state in the nation. The figure shows a 16.2% increase in the past decade, an average net growth of 27,316 older persons per year. Unfortunately, 44.8% of these older persons living alone or with non-relatives have income below the poverty level, a figure based on a national average figure which does not take into account the high cost of living in New York. Some 70,521 elderly persons live in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy area alone.[1]

In an effort to coordinate the many existing programs and services for the aging, County Offices for the Aging have been established in most New York counties through the Older Americans Comprehensive Service Amendment of 1973. The primary tasks of these offices are:

1) the facilitation and utilization of existing services;
2) the reordering of community priorities and resources to permit increased effort to solve the problems of the country's older citizens; and
3) the development of cooperative arrangements with the providers of services.

Among the responsibilities and functions of the offices are three which are related to the present study:

1) providing information and referral services...
2) creating or utilizing a data collection system to store information on the needs of older persons in the country; and

3) engaging in public information programs to make the public more aware of problems associated with aging.[2]

In addition to the staffs of these offices, there are countless health services personnel, recreation workers, social workers, and religious groups who work with the aging throughout the state if not on a full time basis, at least as a considerable part of their regular professional work. The purpose of the present study was to identify the information needs of those persons working with the aging in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) with a view toward a proposal for some type of clearinghouse or information center designed to serve the various groups working with the aging.

This report on the study will consist of a brief review of the literature, an analysis of the needs of those working with the aging as expressed in questionnaires returned, some preliminary recommendations regarding the establishment of an information center, and, finally, possible lines of future research.

Since problems of the aging touch on almost every area of human life, literature on the aging is necessarily diffuse and somewhat elusive. Likewise, those working with the aging do not fall neatly into one category; thus a literature search had to go in many directions. Limiting the search to information needs proved to be a frustrating experience. No literature could be identified specifically on the topic of this study. Three related areas, however, were perused for relevancy to the topic: information needs of the aging, information needs of professional groups in general, and the design and organization of information centers. The appended bibliography, though far from exhaustive, includes a broader range of materials than is discussed here.

In the first category, information needs of the aging, little was found specifically on this topic.[3] In most instances it appeared only as the aging were a part of a larger group, usually termed the disadvantaged. A most recent general work that lists a number of studies of this kind is Childers' The Information-Poor in America.[4] Including the elderly as one of the information-poor groups, the author notes some 96 works relating to such areas as recreation, health, finance, and social services and the information problems they pose.

Other studies that fall into this category usually center on three areas: library or information center services, information services pertaining to a particular geographical area, and what is usually referred to as the I & R services of social agencies.

Library legislation of the 1960's, particularly the Library Services and Construction Act, provided funding for many types of special programs and outreach services, among them services to the aging. Information needed by the senior citizen is frequently similar to that needed by the poor, i.e., knowledge concerning housing, health care, welfare, transportation, legal rights, etc. and since these groups have traditionally not been users of libraries, Neighborhood Information Centers began to appear. These served the aging as well as other disadvantaged groups. In 1971 the Graduate School of Library Service at the University of Illinois held its 17th Annual Allerton Park Institute on this topic, the papers being published under the title Libraries and Neighborhood Information Centers.[5] Other works on this topic, such as Donahue's "Planning for Community Information Centers"[6] and "Information Needs of Poor Neighborhoods[7] followed.

For some of the aging who had been lifelong library users, many special programs had been in existence since the early 1940's. Libraries in large

metropolitan areas such as Cleveland, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, and Milwaukee very early experimented with various ways of providing for the information needs of the elderly. Two studies that have brought this type of service to the fore were published in 1972: Kanner's The Impact of Gerontology Concepts on Principles of Librarianship,[8] a doctoral dissertation prepared at the University of Wisconsin, and an H.E.W. funded study entitled National Survey of Library Services to the Aging,[9] sponsored by the Cleveland Public Library. The January 1973 issue of Library Trends[10] is entirely devoted to this topic and is excellent for both the state-of-the-art type of articles and the bibliographies it contains.

Typical of the studies pertaining to a particular geographical area are Bellamy's study of services in Metropolitan Toronto[11] and the Bay Area Welfare Planning Federation's study of that area's information and referral services.[12] These and similar studies are analyzed in Long's Information and Referral Centers: a Functional Analysis[13] originally prepared as part of a Title IV grant from the H.E.W. Administration on Aging, covering information and referral centers for the aging. A more general discussion of I & R is found in Demone and Long's "Information Referral: the Nucleus of a Human Needs Program.[14]

The second area of literature searching was studies of information needs of other professional workers. Considering the number of studies on the information-seeking behavior and needs of scientists and other researchers, it is surprising that so little has been done on the professionals in various fields.

Broadman, in her "The Professional User: the Library and Informational Service Needs of Practitioners," [15] attempted to identify some of the problems

and needs of those in such fields as medicine, pharmacy, law, theology, nursing, and engineering, all of which are more clearly definable as groups than "practitioners" in the field of aging. In addition, she points out the responsibility of the Federal Government "to take as its foundation policy the philosophic belief that it is vital to the well being of the state that opportunities be made available equally to all citizens for acquiring information on which to base practice in the social professions."[16]

Although there were a number of studies which included some aspects of information needs of a specific professional group, only two seemed parallel to the present study: Line's "The Information Needs of Social Workers,"[17] a British study, and a H.E.W. sponsored study on "Information Searching Behavior of Physicians" investigated by Truesville and Rubenstein,[18] under the auspices of the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences at Northwestern University.

Both studies used questionnaires and interviews and in general came up with similar results. Social workers' needs and uses of information, however, would seem more relevant to the present study in that many working with the aging do come from a social work background. Particularly applicable, it would seem, are three factors that became evident in the latter study: "lack of motivation for searching on the part of social workers, shortage of time for reading, and an overwhelming preference for informal communication.[19] A more fundamental problem is expressed in the following:

> There is a rather low information threshold, imposed partly by the limited time available for reading but partly by the anxiety likely to be caused by an overload of information: too great a body of knowledge may open

> up an excessively wide choice of alternatives and so inhibit the capacity for practical action. The very awareness that a vast corpus of potentially relevant information is in existence may cause alarm and possibly a slight sense of guilt.[20]

This may be applicable to many action-oriented professional groups. The solutions recommended imply "a major role for the professional institutions in gathering, digesting, indexing and organizing a very large amount of information in a palatable way."[21] The further coordinating role of one of the institutions or an academic institution so that uniformity of records, indexing and classification is ensured is particularly appropriate for the present study.

User studies are undertaken primarily to improve information services and should most surely be done before any information system is initiated for a particular group. Although the present study was intended to investigate only user needs, because it was intended that some general recommendations regarding the information services that might be provided to those working with the aging would be made, a limited search of the literature on information centers and systems was made. The vast amount of material on information systems generated by government agencies, academic institutions, (particularly from schools of business, library and information science, computer science, and public administration) and business and industry precluded a thorough search in this area. Only the literature that seemed to provide some relevancy to the kind of information center possible for the clientele of this study was considered.

The Proceedings of a Forum Sponsored by a Panel on Information Analysis Centers of the Committee on Scientific and Technical Information, Federal Council for Science and Technology, proved to be most helpful. Twenty-four experts from both the private and public sector presented papers on various

facets of information analysis centers, with emphasis on information retrieval systems, various indexing and abstracting services, and relationships of the centers to other agencies. The topics were addressed from the points of view represented by government agencies, such as the National Bureau of Standards; business, e.g., CCM Information Corporation in New York; academic institutions, e.g., Stanford University; and professional associations, e.g., the American Geographic Society. While a few of the papers in this report were somewhat theoretical, many dwealt on specific problems and successes encountered in on-going information centers, thus making this document valuable for giving an overview of the important role of information analysis centers in society.

Much of this literature is related to health care. Examples of such studies were Community Mental Health Center Data Systems; a Description of Existing Programs, published by the National Institute of Mental Health,[22] and Haas's "Design Considerations for a State Health Department Information System,"[23] both of which have sections applicable to the implementing of such a system for those working with the aging.

Literature on information systems for planning and decision-making generally has grown out of problems of management, particularly in the vast business conglomerates, but it too can have some relevance to the present study. Most comes from Schools of Business in various universities; typical examples are King and Cleland's "Decision and Information Systems for Strategic Planning,"[24] and Dickson's "Management Information-Decision Systems."[25] These tend to stress the crucial role of accurate, up-to-date information in the decision-making process.

Another body of relevant literature comes from the field of library and/or information science. One of the most helpful works in the Annual

Review of Information Science and Technology which is now in its ninth edition.[26] Each chapter is a bibliographical review of studies in one particular area during the preceding year. Although the chapter titles have changed slightly, there is usually a chapter devoted to the design and evaluation of information systems. Other works devoted to the subject from the library/information science point of view are Weisman's Information Systems, Services and Centers[27] and Technical Information Center Administration, proceedings published as part of the Drexel Information Science Series.[28] Somewhat similar and more recent is Howerton's Management of Information Handling Systems, now in its third edition.[29]

The present study was undertaken to identify information needs of those working with the aging in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy area. Originally it was intended that both questionnaires and interviews would be used; however, because of time constraints and the fact that the already limited budget was cut in half, interviewing was not possible. Another factor that influenced the study as it was planned was that the staff of the New York State Office for the Aging had decided that a larger base of data than that from one SMSA was needed and planned a statewide survey. In order not to duplicate studies, it was decided that one questionnaire would be sent to all identifiable groups working with the aging in New York State and questionnaires from the Albany-Schenectady-Troy SMSA would be duplicated for the present study. While combining the needed information into one questionnaire may have been more expeditious in one way, it made this study more difficult in another. Mailing lists of the New York State Office for the Aging included not only professional workers in responsible positions but also a large number of senior citizen groups, whose information needs were minimal and usually on a different level from the professionals', thus skewing somewhat

the findings for purposes of the study.

A total of 2,057 questionnaires was sent throughout the state with 107 going to the Albany-Schenectady-Troy SMSA. Since the returns from this area were so few, however, it was decided to extend the geographical area to include all of the area designated as Region V by the New York State Office for the Aging. The following counties comprise the Region: Albany, Columbia, Fulton, Greene, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, and Schoharie. This did not substantially increase the number of returns but the 34 returns seemed sufficient to warrant some analysis.

The questionnaire called for name, title, and agency of the respondent, and although everyone answered the questions, it was difficult in a few instances to determine whether the person was a professional, an aide, or an officer in a Senior Citizen group. The majority of responses, as far as could be ascertained, came from professionals working as directors or assistant directors in County Offices for the Aging or directors of nutritional or recreational programs, or counselors. The only other question on the respondent related to educational level and it was optional. Of the professionals who responded 40% had a master's degree; 39%, a bachelor's degree; and 8%, an A.A. degree.

The most detailed section of the questionnaire was on Aging Program Activities. Respondents were asked to check those areas in which they needed more information or assistance. Areas covered Agency Management, Public Administration, Service Planning and Delivery, Aging Issues and Problem Areas, and Education and Attitudes. Table I shows the percentages of those needing information in each of these areas. Interestingly, only four categories were checked by over half the respondents: State Legislation Affecting Older Persons, Counseling Older Persons, Assisting Older Persons

TABLE I

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS NEEDING INFORMATION ON AGENCY PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

AGENCY MANAGEMENT

	Topic	Percentage
1.	Fiscal/Grants Management	44.12%
2.	Budget Planning	32.35
3.	Management Systems	29.41
4.	Contracting Procedures	29.41
5.	Policy Manuals	29.41
6.	Goal-Objective-Priority Setting	26.47
7.	Monitoring/Evaluation/Assessment	23.53
8.	Management Statistics	8.82
9.	Group Dynamics	8.82
10.	Affirmative Action	5.88

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

11.	State Legislation Affecting Older Persons	55.88
12.	Federal Legislation Affecting Older Persons	50.00
13.	Federal Regulations Affecting Older Persons	47.06
14.	Coordination of Titles III and VII	32.35
15.	Participation of Low Income and Minority Groups	29.41
16.	Coordination and Planning	26.47
17.	Need Assessment	26.47
18.	Title VII Applications	23.53
19.	Program Statistics	23.53
20.	Program Materials	23.53
21.	Fund Raising	23.53
22.	Title III Area Plans	20.59
23.	Consumer Involvement	20.59
24.	Advisory Councils	14.71
25.	Public Hearings	11.76
26.	Contribution from Participants	8.82

TABLE I (con't)

SERVICE PLANNING AND DELIVERY

	Topic	Percentage
27.	Outreach	50.00%
28.	In-home Services	50.00
29.	Transportation	38.24
30.	Nutrition and Nutrition Education	35.29
31.	Recreation	35.29
32.	Senior Clubs and Centers	35.29
33.	Information and Referral	32.35
34.	Legal Services	29.41
35.	Escort Services	29.41
36.	Volunteer Programs	29.41
37.	Counseling	26.47
38.	Involvement of Business and Labor	23.53
39.	Involvement of Educational Institutions	20.59
40.	Involvement of Religious Organizations	17.65
41.	Involvement of Managers of Institutions	5.88

AGING ISSUES AND PROBLEM AREAS

42.	Transportation	47.06
43.	Social Services	44.12
44.	Health	41.18
45.	Housing	38.24
46.	Recreation	38.24
47.	Consumer Programs	35.29
48.	Mental Health	35.29
49.	Employment	32.35
50.	Income	32.35
51.	Nutrition	32.35
52.	Retirement	32.35
53.	Pre-Retirement	32.35
54.	Protective Services	32.35
55.	Education	29.41
56.	Crime Control	

TABLE I (con't)

EDUCATION AND ATTITUDES

	Topic	Percentage
57.	Assisting Older Persons in Self-Help Projects	73.53%
58.	Public Sensitivity to Problems of Older Persons	55.88
59.	Counseling Older Persons	52.94
60.	Social and Psychological Isolation of Older Persons	41.18
61.	Techniques for Training Older Persons	35.29
62.	Stereotypes and Images of Older Persons	26.47

in Self-Help Projects, and Public Sensitivity to Problems of Older Persons. Three of these were in the general area of Education and Attitudes. The least-cited categories of informational need were in the areas of Agency Management and Public Administration, specifically Management Statistics, Group Dynamics, Affirmative Action and Contributions from Participants. The only responses found on the blanks at the end of each sections under "Other" were two for "food management" and one for "consulting assistance."

In an effort to determine what kinds of information those working with the aging have available to them and how and where they generally obtain their information, several questions were asked in Part III of the questionnaire. The first had to do with the types of materials that would be helpful. Respondents were asked to check each as to its degree of potential usefulness. Table II shows percentages for each of these.

TABLE II

USEFULNESS OF VARIOUS TYPES OF MATERIALS

Types of Materials	USEFULNESS			
	Very	Somewhat	Little	Did Not Answer
1. Bibliographies	14.71%	14.71%	32.35%	38.23%
2. Abstracts	20.59	32.35	20.58	26.47
3. Manuals on specific program functions	20.59	41.18	5.88	32.35
4. Items from Federal Register				
a) Copies of full proposed regulations	8.82	17.65	20.58	52.94
b) Summaries and editorial suggestions	35.29	20.58	11.76	32.35
5. Newsletter on trends in aging programs	44.11	41.18	---	14.71
6. Newsletter on current research and model programs	41.18	32.35	8.82	17.65
7. Research reports and monographs	8.82	23.53	20.59	47.06

The responses are similar to those in other user studies. They show, for example, that professionals working in the field (as opposed to those in research) are not interested in large amounts of reading materials, no matter how relevant; their main interest is in summaries, digests, and newsletter types of material. In this instance only three categories showed higher percentages for very helpful than for somewhat or little helpful: summaries and editorial suggestions of items for the Federal Register; newsletter on trends in aging programs; and newsletter on current research and model programs. Three who commented under "Other" listed the following:

"Summaries of federal legislation as it is occurring"

"A reliable, complete and current information and resource manual at the State level for specific programs available."

"Canned ads; Public Relations spots for Radio and TV"

Four questions relating to materials presently available to the respondents were asked. In answer to the question regarding the number of professional publications they personally receive, of those answering the question, 53% received from 1-4 while 18% received 5 or more. Twenty-eight percent, however, received none. As to the number available in their offices or the immediate area in which they work, again the majority of those who responded (46%) answered 1-4. Twenty-one percent had 5-9 available; 15% had 10 or more; another 15% had none available. In answer to a question regarding the accessibility of indexes and abstracts that would be useful in working with the aging, 67% indicated they did have access to these materials; 29% indicated they did not while only 2% checked that they had no need of such materials. Following this was a question on where these

materials were available with five sources for checking. Not surprisingly, Office Collection was checked by the highest percentage of respondents (29.41%). Others were Agency library/information center (26.47%); State Library (26.47%); Public Library (17.65%); with Academic Library (11.76%) the least used source. Other sources mentioned were "New York State Legislature," "the County Office for the Aging Library," and "the State Office for the Aging Library." It is probable that those answering this question answered it as being a general source for materials and not specifically related to abstracts and indexes. It is unlikely that very many office collections or even agency libraries, except for the large agencies, would contain such expensive materials as the Social Science Index, Sociological Abstracts, Public Affairs Information Service (PAIS), or even Abstracts for Social Workers.

When respondents were asked to characterize their own information needs by ranking four statements, they generally ranked them in the order in which they appeared on the questionnaire:

1. Routine information needed to carry on your work
2. Specific facts on programs or issues
3. Information on new developments and programs in the field
4. Information on recent research in the field

Since the majority answering the questionnaire were involved in actually working with the public, it is understandable that Number 1 and Number 2 were most important to them. The four who checked Number 3 or Number 4 as most important were those holding relatively high administrative positions and this, too, is understandable.

The sixth question in this part asked for sources from which information

(as distinct from materials) was usually obtained. As has been true in similar studies, the majority checked "Colleagues in your own agency and "Colleagues elsewhere" (58.82% each). "Professional association" (38.24%); "Agency library/information center" (29.41%); and "Other libraries" (17.65%) were next in order.

Under "Other" were added the following (as stated):

Office of Aging

Office of Aging and State Legislature

J.W.B.

Periodicals

Reading, Meetings Workshops

County

New York State Office for the Aging

The last question in the section asked respondents to "cite one example of information you tried and failed to obtain within the recent past." The following eight examples were given:

1. How many and who are the elderly in any given area of Colonie?
2. Status of the Title III and VII legislation currently in committee in Congress with analysis and prognasis and development.
3. Data on the number of 1) handicapped 2) poverty-level 3) home-bound 4) minority elderly living in Albany County--according to municipality, e.g., town, village, city.
4. a) Information on a specific AOA Demonstration Project
   b) Identification of a specific meals-on-wheels program in Queens
5. Income tax data on total federal taxes collected from the county.

6. Information concerning current Federal grants available.
7. Comparative information on Title XX of the Social Security Act as it affects the local metropolitan counties.
8. What is budget, fiscal management in a concise outline, not a course?

These questions themselves raise interesting questions regarding the information retrieval process. Some may not be answerable, e.g., questions on income tax data; others, however, could have been answered by a call to the State Library, the New York State Office for the Aging Library, or other agency libraries.

Had interviews been possible, more sample questions would probably have been obtained, and these are a fairly good indication of the real information needs of people.

Section IV of the questionnaire dealt with the possible role of the state in providing additional publications and speaker/consultant services. Approximately 90% of those answering were in favor of additional statewide publications reporting activities in New York State in the field of the aging. Areas of activities that were checked by the respondents as being useful were:

New program designs and services being offered by local agencies (61.76%)

Demonstration programs and services (58.82%)

Legislation and issues being considered by the government (47.06%)

Innovative solutions to problems facing service providers (44.12%)

Sources and approaches to obtaining new funding (44.12%)

Planning and research studies being conducted (32.35%)

Statistical and planning information (17.65%)

Areas added by respondents were recreation and home care.

Of those who indicated interest in such publications, only 53% stated they would be willing to pay an annual subscription fee for the service.

The section on the establishment of a Speakers Bureau of Gerontologists and Consultant Services revealed the following:

62% would favor the establishment of a Speakers Bureau;

15% would be willing to pay part of the costs;

53% would have use for a consultant at least once a year

65% would have use for a speaker at least once a year; and

47% would have use for a speaker more than once a year (from 3-12 times).

When asked for areas of interest for speakers and consultants, the following suggestions were made:

For Consultants	For Speakers
Organization	Consumer education
Cost Analysis	Legislation
Use of volunteers	Retirement
Motivation	Funding
Home nursing	Nutrition
Choosing a nursing home	Transportation
Employment	Legal Matters
Programming	Entertainment
Public Health	Community Relations
Housing	Religious Crafts (Jewish)
Audit	Psychological Health
Evaluation	Tax Breaks for Senior Citizens
Funding	

A final question asked if there were areas not covered in the questionnaire that the respondent felt need to be addressed. The four who responded noted the following:

How to obtain resources for programing from the community

Role of Advisory council

Consumer participation in planning

Obtaining home care

From this study it appears that respondents do have some information needs and would be interested in assistance. What would seem to be most helpful in their opinion is some kind of newsletter emphasizing new program designs or demonstration programs being offered at the local or state level and current information especially in the areas of legislation on both the federal and state levels, transportation, health and nutrition, and home services. If present reading and information patterns prevail, the newsletter, in whatever form, should be brief, concisely written and frequent enough to present material that is current, particularly in the areas of legislation and grants.

A speakers bureau and consultant system would also be helpful even though some would not be willing or able to pay for such services. While many recommendations for topics were suggested, it appears that the areas recommended for the newsletter are fairly consistent with those topics most frequently noted for consultants and speakers. Consultants might be more appropriately used for areas such as budget and cost analysis, organization and communication within the agency, and evaluation, while speakers could be invited for topics on legislation and legal matters, health, nutrition, and transportation problems. It might even be possible with

speakers to prepare some video or audio tape packages that could be borrowed by other agencies.

As originally planned, the present study was to be the first phase of setting up some type of information center for the Albany-Schenectady-Troy SMSA which might serve as a model for other information centers throughout the State. Since the New York State Office for the Aging is now considering a statewide information clearinghouse instead, it would be inappropriate to make recommendations based only on results of a small segment of the potential users of such a clearinghouse. There are, however, certain observations that have emerged from this study, both in the process and in the user responses, that should be taken into consideration before any such clearinghouse would be planned.

First of all, when the data is collected and analyzed from the questionnaires sent throughout the state, there are a number of correlations that should be studied, e.g., the positions of the respondents to the needs expressed in each of the topic areas, and the geographical location to the kinds of materials available. Is it possible, for example, that those living in the areas of the State Library and the New York Public Library, have fewer information needs because of the proximity of a large research library?

Secondly, some analysis should be made of the information flow within the New York State Office for the Aging and whatever exists now in the way of information flow between the Office and the County Offices. It became apparent during one meeting with some of the staff of the State Office that certain materials were being received by some staff members while others who were not aware of the fact, but needed them and were seeking them elsewhere.

A fairly comprehensive library exists within the Agency office consisting of some 600-700 volumes, 50-60 periodical titles, 6000-7000 government documents, and some films and tapes. The librarian works closely with State Office staff members in building the collection according to their needs. The classification system is one devised by the State Office and not one in national use. A major consideration in the establishment of an information center or clearinghouse is what relationship it would have with the present library in staffing, organization, and collection. It is apparent without further study, however, that the present library staff could not take on the tasks involved in even a small scale information center of the type that would seem to be indicated by this study. Such a step would result in present material--government documents and technical reports, especially, which are so time-consuming to classify--being further delayed in availability to the staff

It is important also that some investigation be made of the present and potential relationship of the library with other agency libraries. There is at present a small group of agency personnel, not all library/information center directors, who are concerned about the information explosion and its effect on their staffs and constituencies. While organized rather informally at this time, they are seeking ways to cooperate more closely and perhaps find alternative methods of access to needed information.

Lastly, as a preliminary recommendation, ways of funding the proposed information center should be investigated almost immediately. Grant funds are scarce but with a proposal that would present the possibility of a model for other states there would seem to be reasonable chance for success

in funding. This is especially important for securing a highly qualified person to direct the center and this, in the opinion of the investigator, would be the key to the success of such a venture. Secondly, with the continued increase of informational materials, it would seem necessary eventually for such a center to consider the use of computerized data bases, a number of which would be relevant to problems of the aging, e.g., MEDLINE, ERIC, and Psychological Abstracts. These usually decrease in cost as more users subscribe, but there are rather high initial costs in initiating such series.

To summarize the brief and preliminary recommendations of this study:

1) a thorough analysis should be made of the statewide data;
2) a system analysis of the information flow within the State Office and of that office and the County Offices should be made;
3) relationships with other state agencies regarding information problems should be strengthened;
4) funding possibilities should be investigated with a view to obtaining a highly qualified director and initiating at some later date a computerized information retrieval system.

In conclusion, it might be well to keep in mind (and apply to the social sciences) the words of E.I. Brady, chairman of a government panel on information analysis centers:

> ...the warehouse of knowledge already gained... is a major national and global asset. But using that asset requires locating relevant information packages in the warehouse and matching them to the problem at hand. Since the warehouse acquires more than two million pages of new information each year, and since the content is not always fully identified, the user frequently requires help. Moreover, information is not uniform, and the wise user seeks assurance of the accuracy of the information he uses. Meeting these user needs...is the reason for the existence of the Information Analysis Center.[30]

FOOTNOTES

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19. Op. cit., Line, p. 8.

20. Ibid., p. 17.

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APPENDIX

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT ALBANY
1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, N.Y. 12222

School of Library and Information Science

October 21, 1975

Dear Colleague:

Most of the research in the area of aging is focused on the problems of the aging, programs for them, or specialized training for those working with the aging. Little has been done on the information needs of those who work in the field even though studies have shown that lack of accurate, up to date information is a crucial problem to all concerned.

I have been awarded a small grant from the Research Foundation of the State University of New York at Albany to determine the information needs not of the aging themselves, nor of the research worker, but of those like yourself who are working in the field and who may, on occasion, have insufficient time to search for information that may be vitally needed.

In collaboration with the New York State Office of the Aging, I am asking for your help in obtaining the information needed to complete the study. Your response on the enclosed questionnaire will make it possible to determine areas of information needs and also to make some recommendations for implementing an effective information system. I am planning also to interview at least some of the participants in the study.

A stamped, addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience. We would appreciate the return of the questionnaire by November 15. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Lucille Whalen
Associate Dean

LW/jas
Enclosures 2

NEW YORK STATE OFFICE FOR THE AGING [30]
855 Central Avenue, Albany, New York 12206 • 518 457-7313

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MEMORANDUM

Date:_____ Number:_____

To: Area Agencies on Aging, Title VII Projects, Recreation Programs, RSVP Projects

Subject: Survey of Information Needs

In an effort to stimulate and promote the exchange of knowledge at all levels in the field of aging, the New York State Office for the Aging is beginning a clearinghouse operation for transmitting a variety of technical and general resources to inform and educate interested persons and to assist them in expanding and/or improving upon the functions currently underway.

The vehicle for dissemination is a Technical Assistance Memoranda series, the schedule of which will be determined by the availability and urgency of the information to be dispatched. (We anticipate that in the initial stage of the effort, one TAM for each program area will be released monthly.) One basic step in making the clearinghouse a valuable service is determining what particular information needs and/or desires would best be met through the TAM series.

The State University of New York at Albany, School of Library and Information Science is collaborating with us to determine the scope of information needs among workers in the field of aging. The attached questionnaire is meant to solicit your interests and needs. When responses have been tabulated, the SUNYA School of Library and Information Science will make recommendations on how we can best collect, organize and utilize existing resources to satisfy the expressed needs.

We ask that you give the questionnaire prompt attention, and try to express your views as broadly as possible so that the clearinghouse role will be most meaningful in responding effectively to your information needs.

Attachment

1-800-342-9871 Senior Citizen's Hot Line
Call toll-free for information about local programs and services

NEW YORK STATE OFFICE FOR THE AGING
855 Central Avenue, Albany, New York 12206 • 518 457-7313

INFORMATION NEEDS OF WORKERS IN THE FIELD OF AGING

Questionnaire

I. Personal Information (please fill in or check as appropriate)

A. Respondent's Name _____

B. Respondent's Title _____

C. Name of Agency _____

D. Address _____

THE FOLLOWING QUESTION IS OPTIONAL. IT IS BEING ASKED FOR USE OF THE SUNYA SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE.

Respondent's Education (highest degree obtained)

/ /	A.A.	Field: _____
/ /	B.A./B.S.	_____
/ /	M.A./M.S.	_____
/ /	Doctorate	_____

1-800-342-9871 Senior Citizens' Hot Line
Call toll-free for information about local programs and services

II. Aging Program Activities: (Please check if you require or desire technical assistance materials in the following areas)

AGENCY MANAGEMENT

/ / Fiscal/Grants Management
/ / Budget Planning
/ / Management Systems
/ / Contracting Procedures
/ / Management Statistics
/ / Monitoring/Evaluation/Assessment
/ / Goal-Objective-Priority Setting
/ / Group Dynamics
/ / Affirmative Action
/ / Policy Manuals
/ / Other _____
_____

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

/ / Coordination & Planning
/ / Need Assessment
/ / Advisory Councils
/ / Title III Area Plans
/ / Title VII Applications
/ / Coordination of Titles III & VII
/ / Participation of Low Income & Minority Groups
/ / Consumer Involvement
/ / Public Hearings
/ / Contributions from Participants
/ / Program Statistics
/ / Program Materials
/ / Federal Legislation Affecting Older Persons
/ / Federal Regulations Affecting Older Persons
/ / State Legislation Affecting Older Persons
/ / Fund Raising
/ / Other _____
_____

SERVICE PLANNING AND DELIVERY

/ / Nutrition & Nutrition Education
/ / Information & Referral
/ / Counseling
/ / Outreach
/ / Recreation
/ / Transportation
/ / In-Home Services
/ / Legal Services
/ / Escort Services
/ / Senior Clubs & Centers
/ / Volunteer Programs
/ / Involvement of Educational Institutions
/ / Involvement of Business & Labor
/ / Involvement of Managers of Institutions
/ / Involvement of Religious Organizations
/ / Other _____
_____

AGING ISSUES & PROBLEM AREAS

/ / Income
/ / Health
/ / Mental Health
/ / Nutrition
/ / Transportation
/ / Housing
/ / Employment
/ / Retirement
/ / Pre-Retirement
/ / Recreation
/ / Education
/ / Social Services
/ / Protective Services
/ / Legal Services
/ / Crime Control
/ / Consumer Programs
/ / Other _____

EDUCATION & ATTITUDES

/ / Stereotypes & Images of Older Persons
/ / Social & Psychological Isolation of Older Persons
/ / Counseling Older Persons
/ / Assisting Older Persons in Self-Help Projects
/ / Techniques for Training Older Persons
/ / Public Sensitivity to Problems of Older Persons
/ / Other _____
_____

III. Types of Materials

A. Needed: (Please check appropriate columns to indicate potential usefulness in your work)

	Very	Some	Little
1. Bibliographies	/ /	/ /	/ /
2. Abstracts or summaries of articles, books, etc.	/ /	/ /	/ /
3. Manuals on specific program functions	/ /	/ /	/ /
4. Items from Federal Register:	/ /	/ /	/ /
(a) Copies of full proposed regulations	/ /	/ /	/ /
(b) Summaries and editorial suggestions	/ /	/ /	/ /
5. Newsletter on trends in aging programs	/ /	/ /	/ /
6. Newsletter on current research and model programs	/ /	/ /	/ /
7. Research reports and monographs	/ /	/ /	/ /
8. Other _____	/ /	/ /	/ /

B. Available to you at present:

1. Approximately how many professional publications do you receive personally?
   / / None
   / / 1-4
   / / 5 or more

2. Approximately how many are available in your office or in the immediate area in which you work?
   / / None
   / / 1-4
   / / 5-9
   / / 10 or more

3. Do you have access to abstracts and indexes that would be useful to you in your work?
   / / Yes
   / / No
   / / No Need

4. If yes, where do you obtain these?
   / / Office collection
   / / Agency library/information center
   / / Public Library
   / / Academic Library
   / / State Library
   / / Other _____

5. How would you characterize your information needs? (Number 1 to 4 in order of importance to you)
   ____ Routine information needed to carry on your work
   ____ Specific facts on programs or issues
   ____ Information on new developments and programs in the field
   ____ Information on recent research in the field.

6. Sources from which you usually obtain your information:
   / / Colleagues in your own agency
   / / Colleagues elsewhere
   / / Agency library/information center
   / / Other libraries
   / / Professional association
   / / Other _____

7. Can you cite one example of information you tried and failed to obtain within the recent past?

_____

_____

_____

_____

IV. Publications in Aging in New York State:

A. Would you be in favor of additional statewide publications reporting activities in New York State that are taking place in the field of aging? / / Yes / / No

If yes: In which of the following areas would you find reports of current activities and/or articles useful?

/ / New program designs and services being offered by local agencies
/ / Demonstration programs and services
/ / Planning and research studies being conducted
/ / Legislation and issues being considered by government
/ / Innovative solutions to problems facing service providers
/ / Statistical and planning information
/ / Sources and approaches to obtaining new funding
/ / Other (please specify) _____

_____

B. Would your agency be willing or able to pay annual subscription costs for a regular publication in this area? / / Yes / / No

V. Consultant and Speakers Bureau:

A. Would you be in favor of the establishment of a bureau of gerontologists from universities and colleges available to speak or consult in such areas as "need assessments," training, current legislative issues, and areas of program technical assistance? / / Yes / / No

B. Would your agency be willing or able to pay part of the cost for these services? / / Yes / / No

C. Would your agency have use for a consultant at least once a year? / / Yes / / No

If yes, are there any particular areas in which a consultant would be useful? (please specify)

_____

_____

D. Would your agency have use for a speaker at least once a year? (If more frequently, please specify number _____.) / / Yes / / No

If yes, are there any particular topics or areas of special interest to you? (please specify)

_____

_____

VI. Are there any areas not covered in this questionnaire you feel need to be addressed? (Please specify) / / Yes / / No

_____

_____

* * * * *

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS SURVEY. PLEASE RETURN THE SURVEY IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE.